

FORM B – BUILDING

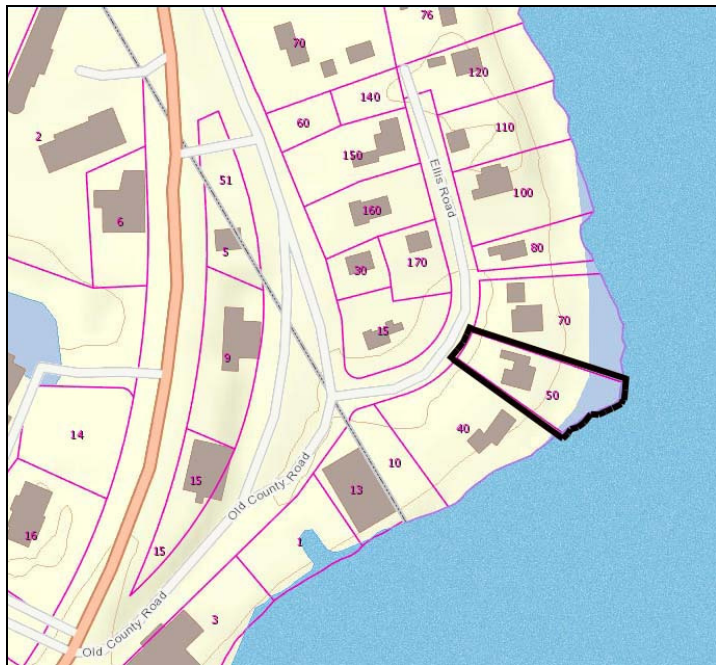
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Photograph



View from northwest.

Locus Map (north at top)



Recorded by: Larson Fisher Associates with Kathryn Grover

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date: April 2013

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

22-016

ORLEANS

EAS.591

Town/City: Eastham

Place: South Eastham

Address: 50 Ellis Road

Historic Name: John B. & Emelie Meunier House

Uses: Present: single family residential

Original: single family residential

Date of Construction: 1926-37

Source: deeds, town records

Style/Form: Rotated Ranch

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete block

Wall/Trim: wood shingles/wood

Roof: asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: front gabled 1-stall garage

Major Alterations (*with dates*): expansion of rear sunporch and addition of cross-gabled rear ell (dates unknown)

Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: .24 acre

Setting: The dwelling is located within a single family residential subdivision on the east side of Ellis Road. The lot has water frontage on Town Cove, an inlet of the Atlantic Ocean. The property is bordered on the north and south by other dwellings. Commercial uses are located farther west across Old State Highway and Old County Road.

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EASTHAM

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

This one-story wood frame dwelling has a gable roof with a two-bay, cross-gabled front pavilion. It reflects the Cape Cod aesthetic with its weathered gray wood shingles and white wood trim. The front entry is in the main section of the house to the left of the pavilion. Originally the house had exposed rafter ends, four-over-one Craftsman-style double hung windows, and a small shed-roofed rear sunporch off its right rear corner. It appears that the rear porch has been expanded and a small cross-gabled rear ell added to the main section off its north side. A small recessed left side ell with gable roof is also original. Two brick chimneys, one on the left side wall between the main section and the left side ell, and one interior, are evidently original as well. Although all the windows appear to have been replaced, it retains authentic wood window blinds, at least on the front windows. An octagonal fixed pane window has been introduced to the left of the front door. In 2006 wind damage to the roof, garage door and windows was reported, thus the roof appears to have been reclad with the architectural-style asphalt shingles at that time (unifying the roofing material which photos show were of different colors prior to that point). This may also have been when the windows were replaced with the current one-over-one sash.¹

A garage located immediately in front of the left side ell was once detached, but looks to have been connected to the house at some point. It is clad with waney edge clapboards in a natural weathered gray. There is a low concrete retaining wall between the house and the water's edge. The property once clear of any major vegetation now features some mature trees and shrubs.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The house at 50 Ellis Road appears to have been one of two that real estate developer Gilbert E. Ellis had built in his Ellis Road subdivision by 1937, and in December of that year he sold it and three undeveloped lots southwest of that property to the brothers John B. and Edward Meunier. Ellis was a farmer, realtor, and owner of a shore net and pound fishery and was born in Brewster in 1867; his father, Thaddeus, was a fisherman, and his mother, Caroline J. Norway, was born in Spain. Ellis began his career as a store clerk when he was fourteen, if not younger. At the time of his marriage in 1887 he worked as a salesman. The 1900 census shows Ellis as a fisherman; the 1910 census shows him more specifically as a weir fisherman. He was among a declining number of Cape fishermen in what was termed the "shore net and pound fishery," which used large nets attached to a wood framework extending from the shore outward to catch such inshore schooling fish as herring and menhaden; these were sold as bait to the offshore fishing industry, and other species caught in the nets were sold to urban fresh-fish markets after rail lines reached the Cape in the 1870s. In 1914 the town of Brewster granted Ellis a permit to build six fish pounds in its coastal waters, and by 1920 Ellis was one of three Brewster men who ran a pound fishery; he employed seven men, among the most of any of the 43 pound fisheries in the state, and caught \$3100 of fish.²

Once a prosperous industry on Cape Cod, the pound fishery began to decline after World War I, and by 1920 Ellis was probably preparing to leave the industry. The 1920 census shows him as a farmer, and by 1929 he is listed as a realtor. In September 1924 he bought four acres in South Eastham bordered mostly by the state highway, Town Cove, and what was, for a brief time, a canal that connected Town Cove to the river at Boat Meadow on Cape Cod Bay, a distance of less than a mile.³ Ellis acquired the tract from New York City insurance broker Frederick Dorflinger Suydam, whose father, William Farrington Suydam, was an affluent Pennsylvania silk manufacturer and a summer resident of Orleans. The tract was part of the far larger holdings of Captain Heman Smith and his wife Louisiana Crosby Smith, who lived at 70 Old State Highway (EAS.43). In 1881, five years after the Smiths were lost at sea in the wreck of the bark *Burnside*, their children sold the property to their sibling Francis M. Smith (1852-1922), who in 1898 sold it to Somerville carpenter George S. Newcomb, an Orleans native. In 1913 Newcomb's son, George E. Newcomb, sold the four-acre tract to Albert F. Sherman, superintendent of the quarantine station on Gallup's Island in Boston Harbor, and in 1916 Sherman and his wife sold it to Frederick Suydam's mother, Mary Elizabeth Dorflinger Suydam.⁴

By January 1926 Ellis had built a house—what is now 76 Old State Highway—on the northernmost 1.5 acres of the tract. Tax records for 1937 show him as the owner of two cottages, each valued at \$1500, two garages, and eighteen lots of land on nearly three acres of land. In early December 1937 Ellis sold lot 9 with its building—now 50 Ellis Road—lots 10, 11, and 12, and a half-

¹ Town of Eastham building permit records, correspondence dated Jan. 10, 2006, from insurance agency reporting damage to property.

² On the pound fishery, see Matthew McKenzie, *Clearing the Coastline: The Nineteenth-Century Ecological & Cultural Transformation of Cape Cod* (Hanover, NH, and London: University Press of New England, 2010), especially 11-12, 33, 91, 96, 138-39, 164, 172; *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Harbor and Land Commissioners For the Year 1914* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1915), 100; and "Returns from the Shore Net and Pound Fisheries for the Year 1920," *Annual Report of the Division of Fisheries and Game for the Year Ending November 30, 1920* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1921), 151-58.

³ Alice A. Lowe, comp., *Nauset on Cape Cod: A History of Eastham*, 4th ed. (Eastham, MA: Eastham Historical Society, 1968), 35-36, states that the canal was dug in 1804 through "land following very nearly the boundary line between the towns of Eastham and Orleans" and became known as "Jeremiah's Gutter" where it crossed the property of Jeremiah Smith. A shallow channel, the canal filled quickly, and in 1817 the Eastham and Orleans Canal Proprietors built a wider one, but it was abandoned at some unstated later date.

⁴ William H. Smith, Boston; Mary M. Smith and Nellie J. Smith, all formerly of Eastham, to Francis M. Smith, 1 November 1881, Barnstable County Registry of Deeds (BCD) 148:366; Francis M. Smith, Somerville, to George S. Newcomb, 5 November 1898, BCD 296:12; George S. Newcomb to George E. Newcomb, 28 May 1909, BCD 296:105; George E. Newcomb to Albert F. Sherman, Boston, 6 January 1913, BCD 321:21; Albert F. and Emma L. Sherman to Mary E. Suydam, Montclair NJ, 15 August 1916, BCD 345:440; Frederick D. Suydam, NYC, to Gilbert E. Ellis, East Brewster, 4 September 1924, BCD 409:454.

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acre of "flats" between a an extension of the boundaries of lots 8 and 9 to the Meuniers.⁵ John B. and Edward Meunier were the sons of Theodore and Exilda Milliard Meunier, who had emigrated to the United States from French-speaking Canada in 1899 with their children Theodore Jr., Joseph, and Edward, born in 1897; John B. Meunier was born in Warwick, Rhode Island, probably in 1900. By 1930 the brothers had both married French Canadian immigrant women and had moved out of their parents' household. John B. Meunier was living in Warren, Rhode Island, and working as a dredger for an oyster company, and by then Edward was working as a loom fixer in Willimantic, Connecticut.

By 1940 the family of John Meunier had moved into the house at 50 Ellis Road (and may have built the fish processing plant at 40 Ellis Road around that time). The 1940 census lists John B. Meunier and his family as one of two households on Ellis Road. He was then working as a wholesale shellfish buyer, and the census indicates that he had lived elsewhere in Barnstable County in 1935. His household included his wife Emelia, sixteen-year-old daughter Alice, and twelve-year-old daughter Loretta. The census enumerator in 1940 noted in the margin that ownership of the property was "shared with brother." A 1942 draft registration card for Edward Meunier, then living in Apponaug, Rhode Island, notes that he was a wholesale shellfish dealer and gave his brother John as a contact. Tax records for 1947 document that John B. Meunier owned lots 9-12 in the Ellis subdivision as well as a cottage valued at \$2200, a garage at \$150, and a "fish house" at \$1000.

In 1955 Edward Meunier and his wife Alphonsine sold their interest in 40 and 50 Ellis Road to John B. and Emelie Meunier, and by 1965 the latter couple had transferred their interest to their daughters Alice A. Bernard, wife of Albert Joseph Bernard, and Loretta Rayhill, wife of Robert J. Rayhill. In 1965 Alice and her husband ceded their interest in the Ellis Road properties to her sister Loretta, and in 1966 Loretta Rayhill sold the properties to Elizabeth P. Daiute of Braintree. In 1968 she and her husband Michael George Daiute sold 50 Ellis Road to Mallebarre Realty Trust, who sold it to East Orleans beautician Christina Kavanaugh and Peter J. Kavanaugh of Poughkeepsie, New York, in 1969. Marie Kavanaugh is the current owner.⁶

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MAPS

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PHOTOGRAPHS

⁵ Gilbert E. Ellis, Brewster, to John B. Meunier, Orleans, and Edward Meunier, Apponaug RI, 4 December 1937, BCD 534:240.

⁶ Edward and Alphonsine Meunier, Warwick RI, to John B. and Emelie Meunier, Eastham, 11 April 1955, BCD 905:208; Albert J. and Alice A. Bernard, Warwick RI, to Loretta E. Rayhill, Warwick RI, 15 December 1965, SED 1321:718; Loretta E. Rayhill, Warwick RI, to Michael G. and Elizabeth P. Daiute, Braintree, 14 June 1966, BCD 1338:527; Michael G. and Elizabeth P. Daiute, Braintree, to Mallebarre Realty Trust, 2 July 1968, BCD 1406:861; Mallebarre Realty to Christina Kavanaugh, East Orleans, and Peter J. Kavanaugh, Poughkeepsie NY, 21 February 1969, BCD 1428:773

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(credit Larson Fisher Associates, 2012-2013 unless otherwise noted)



The subject property, 50 Ellis Road (left), and the Meunier fish processing plant at 40 Ellis Road (right); (photograph courtesy Herb Skelly and Eastham Historical Commission).

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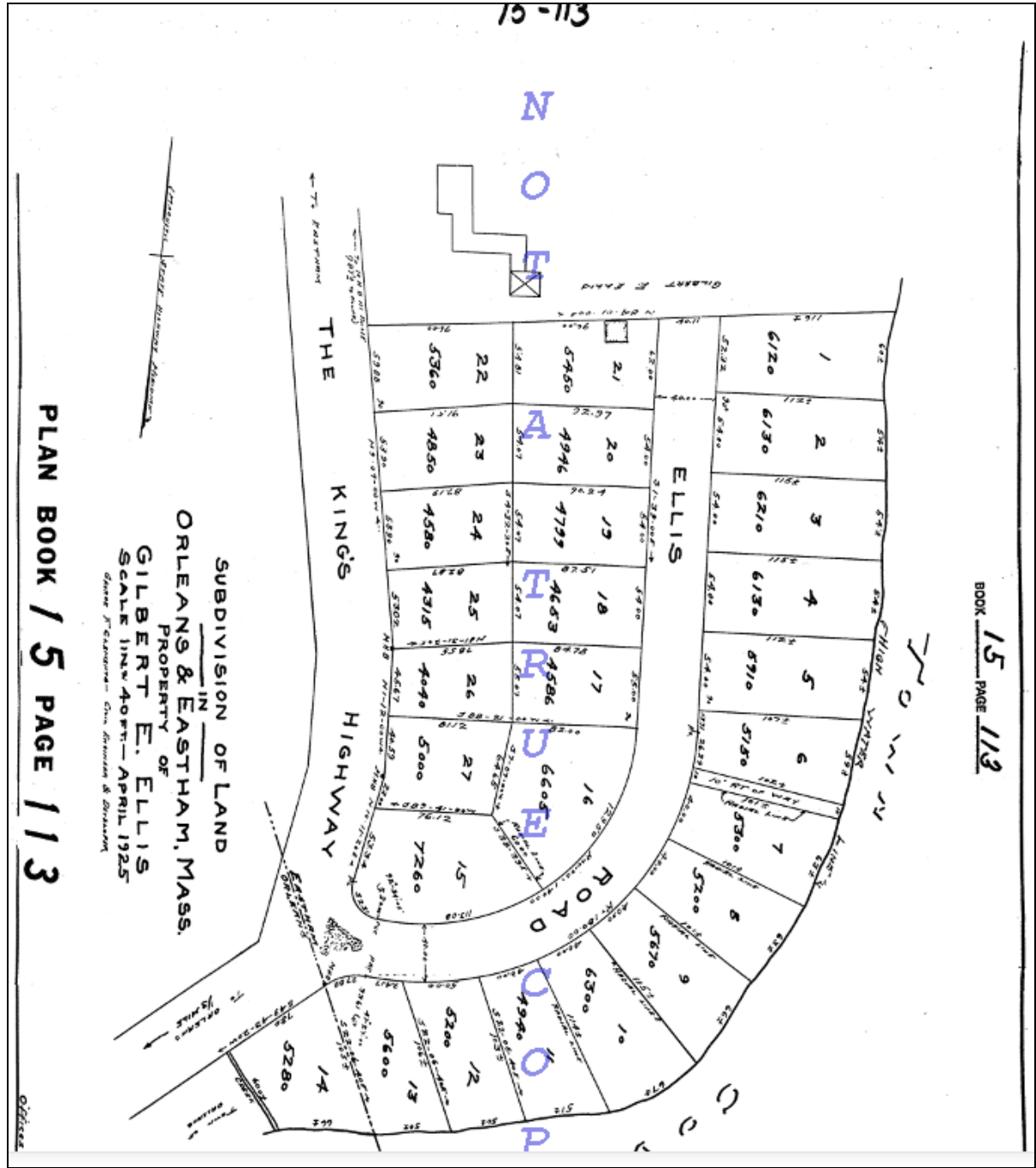
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SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



The 1925 Ellis subdivision (BCP 15:113): 50 Ellis Road occupies lot 9.